



AGSA celebrates 50 years of minimalist masterpiece by Donald Judd

Adelaide, Australia: One of the Art Gallery of South Australia's most significant works, Donald Judd's triangular sculpture *Untitled*, 1974-75, celebrates its fiftieth anniversary in 2025. Today considered a masterwork of American minimalism, it attracted both admiration and controversy when it was first unveiled in 1975. AGSA will explore the work's storied history and artistic significance on Friday 2 May with the premiere screening of a newly commissioned documentary and a curated display of Judd's original project drawings and archival material.

The 7.6m long concrete structure came to be at AGSA through a timely combination of chance and quick thinking. American artist Donald Judd (1928–1994) initially proposed to make a site-specific work in Sydney while visiting Australia in 1974 for the exhibition *Some Recent American Art*, on tour from New York's Museum of Modern Art. However, when a suitable site could not be found, AGSA's then-director John Baily seized the opportunity and offered AGSA's courtyard as an alternative. This nimble thinking birthed the only site-specific Donald Judd piece in the Southern Hemisphere.

AGSA Director Jason Smith says, 'What came about as a fortuitous opportunity fifty years ago is now one of AGSA's most compelling works. Donald Judd's *Untitled* reflects the impressive depth and quality of AGSA's collection, standing as a permanent reminder of the Gallery's long-practiced history of innovation and adaptability.'

Originally believing the site to be flat, Judd began to conceive ideas for the AGSA work – only to dispense with them when he reached Adelaide and discovered a gentle slope. While in the city in

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May 1974, he made new drawings and pegged out the ground. His envisaged shape became triangular, and its slanting topmost surfaces reflected the unexpected lie of the land. Working with engineer and Gallery Board trustee Philip Fargher alongside local construction company Marshall & Brougham, the sculpture emerged as an expression of sharp geometric angles met with horizontal lines, features now synonymous with Judd's expansive career.

The unveiling of the work in 1975 was not without controversy. In the last phases of the Vietnam War, anti-American sentiment ran high, and both the exhibition and Judd's sculpture commission caused a public outcry in Adelaide. Local academics joined with students, political groups and the media to denounce it as 'American imperialism' through protests and debate, which continued into 1975.

Curator of Prints, Drawings & Photographs, AGSA, Maria Zagala says, 'Donald Judd's *Untitled* is a treasure hidden in plain sight, with many of our visitors not realising that the piece has such a rich history. This sculpture is one of only a handful of site-specific outdoor installations ever created by the artist, making it an incredibly important work for South Australia and within Judd's international oeuvre.'

Flavin Judd, Donald Judd's son and Director of Judd Foundation says, 'Permanent pieces like *Untitled* at the Art Gallery of South Australia gave Don a chance to expand and experiment. One of the great things about a permanent work is that Don could explore materiality and deal with something like concrete, which you wouldn't necessarily do with something smaller that would live on a wall.'

Some artists are radical but not visually interesting, and some are aesthetically interesting but not radical. It's rare for those two qualities to come together, and it's even more rare for an artist to work across art, architecture and design. I think that's what makes Don so unique as an artist.'

The anniversary of *Untitled* will be celebrated at AGSA at First Fridays on 2 May. A twenty-minute documentary, commissioned by AGSA, will be screened in an in-focus gallery display, revealing the complex creation of the work and the historical context in which it was created. A recorded presentation from Christine Mehring, Professor of Art History, Visual Arts at the University of Chicago will also be screened, discussing Judd's architecture, furniture and design practices. AGSA Curator of Prints, Drawings and Photographs Maria Zagala will additionally host a talk in conversation with Judd experts. Visit agsa.sa.gov.au for full details.

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Image caption: Donald Judd's *Untitled*, 1974–5 at the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide; photo: Geoff Gibbons.